

Western Progressive Opinion: Bring on the Victims! Condemn the Fighters!

By [Prof. James Petras](#)

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We know in some detail of the willing and gratuitous support, which tens of millions of American citizens have bestowed on the White House and Congressional perpetrators of crimes against humanity. The Clinton Administration was freely re-elected in 1996 after deliberately imposing a starvation embargo on Iraq and mounting a relentless, unopposed bombing campaign on that devastated country for four straight years, leading to the documented deaths of over 500,000 children and countless more vulnerable adults.

The majority of US citizens re-elected Bush after he launched wars which caused the deaths of over a million Iraqi civilians, scores of thousands of Afghans, thousands of Pakistanis, and after he gave full support to Israel's murderous attacks on Palestinian civilians and the blockade of vital food, water and fuel to the occupied territories, not to mention the frequent bombing of Lebanon and Syria, which culminated, during Bush's second term, in the horrific Israeli bombing campaign of Lebanese cities and villages killing thousands of civilians. We know this brutality received the unconditional support of the Presidents of the 52 Major American Jewish Organizations and their thousands of affiliated community groups (totaling over one million members). We know that for each and every Israeli assassination of a Palestinian, each dispossession of Palestinians from their land and homes and the uprooting of their orchards, vineyards and the poisoning of their wells, there is a systematic campaign here to obliterate our democratic freedom of speech and assembly - especially our right to publicly condemn Israel and expose its agents operating among US power brokers.

Through hard experience the majority of the American public has come to recognize the pitfalls of militarism and is slowly coming to realize the profound threats posed by the entrenched Zionist Power Configuration to our 'four freedoms'.

That is all to the good. However, these advances in public opinion have been far from sufficient. The American public has just elected a new president who promises to escalate the imperialist military presence in Afghanistan and fill key posts in his regime with known militarists and Zionists from the previous regime of President 'Bill' Clinton.

What has escaped public notice is the almost complete disappearance of the peace movement and its absorption into the pro-war Democratic Party electoral machine of President-Elect Barack Obama. Likewise, the vast majority of US 'progressive' opinion-makers embraced, with occasional mild reservations, the Obama candidacy and, in effect, became part of the 'broad coalition' joining hands with billionaire Zionist zealots and Wall Street financial swindlers, Clintonite 'humanitarian' militarists, impotent millionaire trade union bureaucrats and various and sundry upwardly mobile 'minority' politicians and vote hustlers. Whether progressives were intoxicated by the empty presidential campaign

rhetoric of 'change', they willingly sacrificed their most elementary principles at the service of evil (presumably, they would say, to serve the 'lesser evil'), but no doubt the evils of new imperial wars, complicity with Israel's colonial savagery and the deepening immiseration of the American people.

The US progressive intellectuals show no such (im)moral scruples when it comes to the anti-imperial resistance movements in Asian (especially in the Middle East), Africa and Latin America.

US Progressives and Third World Resistance Movements

Among the most prominent progressive intellectuals (PPIs) in the US and Europe, writers, bloggers and academics, there is nary a single one who exhibits the same 'pragmatism', which they practice in choosing 'lesser evil' politicians in the US or Europe, with regard to political choices in highly conflicted countries. Can we find a single PPI who will argue that they support the democratically elected Hamas in Palestine or Hezbollah in Lebanon, or the popularly supported nationalist Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq, the anti-occupation Taliban in Afghanistan or even the right, recognized under international law, of the Iranian people to the peaceful development of nuclear energy - because, whatever their defects - these are the 'lesser evil'.

Let us consider the issue in greater detail.

PPIs justified their support for Obama on the basis of his campaign rhetoric in favor of peace and justice, even as he voted for Bush's war budgets and foreign aid programs funding the murder of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Afghans, Palestinians, Colombians, Somalis and Pakistanis and the dispossessing and displacement of at least 10 million people from their towns, farms and homes.

The very same PPI reject and refuse to apply the 'lesser evil' criteria in support of Hamas, the democratically elected Palestinian administration in the Gaza, which is in the forefront of the struggle against the brutal Israeli colonial occupation - because it is 'violent' (which means it 'retaliates against almost daily Israeli armed assaults), seeks a 'theocratic state' (similar to the theologically defined 'Jewish' state of Israel), represses dissidents (in the form of occasional crackdowns on CIA-funded Fatah functionaries and militias). At best the PPIs take an interest only in the Palestinian victims of Israel's genocidal embargo of food, water, fuel and medicine; it protests against overt racist assaults by Israel's colonial Judeo-fascist settlers when they assault school girls on their way to school or elderly farmers in their orchards; they protest the arbitrary and deliberate delays at Israeli military checkpoints, which cause the deaths of acutely ill Palestinians, cancer victims, women in labor, men with heart attacks and people in need of kidney dialysis by preventing them from reaching medical facilities. In other words the PPI support the Palestinians as victims but condemn them as fighters who challenge their executioners. The PPI's support for victims is a cost-free posture, providing credibility to the 'progressive' label; opposition to the fighters assures the establishment that the PPI's criticism will not adversely affect the US empire-building and its Israeli allies.

The most outspoken, self-proclaimed progressive 'libertarians' and 'democrats' in the Western world claim to support national self-determination and oppose imperial conquests, yet they unflinchingly reject the real-existing mass popular movements demanding self-

determination and leading the struggle against imperial conquest and foreign occupation. Almost without exception they denounce national resistance movements for not fitting their preconceived notions of perfect justice, peaceful tolerance and secular, democratic principles, which their idea of a resistance movement should embody. Yet the PPI do not impose such criteria in advocating support for candidates in their own countries. Hezbollah is flatly rejected as too 'clerical' by the PPIs, but British progressives supported Tony Blair, the leader of the Labor Party and his role as bloody accomplice to Clinton, Bush, Sharon and a whole host of servile puppet regimes in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere.

In terms of military aggression – and deaths, loss of limbs and homes – the 'lesser evil' Democrats and European Social Democrats and Center-Left politicians have a far worse record than the Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas and Sadrist forces. More to the point, the living conditions and safety of the vast majority of the people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Somalia – by any standard – were vastly better under the independent if authoritarian rule of Saddam Hussain, the clerical Taliban in Afghanistan, the Islamic Councils in Somalia than under the US-EU military occupations and client regimes. Some of the PPIs avoid the real and difficult choices by pretending that there are 'third choices' just on the horizon in countries currently under imperial and colonial conquest and occupation: They reject the imperial armies and the anti-imperial resistance in the name of abstract progressive libertarian principles. The shameless cant and hypocrisy of their position is clear when the same issue is posed in terms of political choices within the imperial mother country. Here the PPIs have a thousand and one arguments to back one (Obama) of the two major imperial war party presidential candidates; here 'realism' and 'lesser evil' arguments come to the fore. And what 'choices' are made! The same libertarians and democrats who condemn the Taliban for its destruction of ancient religious monuments support Democratic candidates, like Obama, who propose to escalate the US military occupation in Afghanistan and intensify the killing fields in South Asia.

There are profound moral and political dilemmas in making political choices in a world in which destructive imperial wars are led by liberal electoral politicians and vigorously resisted by clerical and secular authoritarian movements and leaders. But the historical record of the past three hundred years is clear: Western parliamentary imperialism and its contemporary legacy has destroyed and undermined far more lives and livelihoods in far more countries over a greater time span than even the worst of the post colonial regimes. Moreover, the colonial wars, pursued by 'lesser evil' electoral regimes and politicians, have had a profoundly destructive impact on the very 'democratic values' in the Western countries, which the PPIs profess to defend.

Conclusion

The PPI, by choosing the 'lesser evil' – in the most recent instance, supporting Barack Obama – have condemned themselves to political impotence in the making of Washington's policies and *political irrelevance* to the struggles for national liberation. Consequential supporters of the millions of victims of Western and Israeli butchery do not live off foundation handouts; they make the difficult (and costly) choice to throw in their lot via solidarity with the resistance fighters. The 'cost' to progressive intellectuals in the US, of course, is a drying up of invitations to speak at universities with offers of five-figure honorariums; the 'benefit' is self-respect and the dignity that comes from being part of an international anti-imperialist movement.

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Articles by: **[Prof. James Petras](#)**

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